CHAPTER 6

Ethnicity and Nationalism

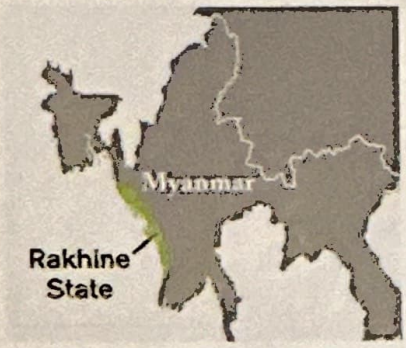
Learning Objectives

- Define ethnicity and ethnic identity from an anthropological perspective.
- Describe how ethnicity is created and activated rather than biologically determined.
- Explain how ethnicity and the nation are related.

One million Rohingya refugees have fled their homes in Myanmar (also known as Burma) in recent years. Driven out by a systematic military campaign of murder, torture, rape, and imprisonment, Rohingya have escaped by boat to India, Malaysia, and Indonesia and by foot across the Naf River to makeshift refugee camps in neighboring Bangladesh. Thousands more are internally displaced in western Myanmar, their villages burned and homes destroyed.

The mostly Muslim Rohingya have faced decades of discrimination and repression under successive governments, including earlier waves of violence in 2012 and 2016. With the most recent atrocities, Myanmar's military appears determined to drive out the Rohingya ethnic minority group in an act of genocide and erase them from the nation's history.

This level of interethnic conflict and state-sponsored violence has not always been the norm in Myanmar. After the country achieved independence from Britain in 1948, the government officially listed the Rohingya



MAP 6.1
Rakhine State, Myanmar

among the nation's 135 ethnic groups, issued citizenship identification cards, and granted them the right to vote. But the 1982 Citizenship Law effectively stripped Rohingya of citizenship and reversed their official recognition as an ethnic minority group. Later, the government stopped issuing birth certificates to Rohingya babies and excluded Rohingya from the country's census. Today, the Rohingya are one of the largest stateless populations in the world.

Ethnic Rohingya leaders assert deep roots in Myanmar's Rakhine State, stretching back over 1,000 years. But the Rohingya's adversaries brand them as interlopers in the majority Buddhist kingdom—illegal Muslim immigrants brought from neighboring Bengal to farm and mine under British colonial rule (1824–1948). Misled by anti-Rohingya propaganda, many in the majority Buddhist Bamar ethnic group fear the Rohingya are part of a militant Muslim crusade to wipe out the Buddhist religion.

How can anthropological ideas about ethnicity, nationalism, colonialism, and the nation-state help us think more deeply about the plight of the Rohingya people and ethnic and religious minorities in other places?

While ethnicity is often popularly imagined to have deep historical and perhaps biological roots, anthropological research instead reveals the ways in which ethnicity is constructed over time through complex political, economic, and cultural processes, thickly entangled in the aftereffects of colonialism. As we will see throughout this chapter (and also in Chapter 11), over the past 400 years, as countries competed for raw materials, cheap labor, and markets,

Many Rohingya refugees have settled into makeshift camps in Bangladesh. Here, Rohingya boys from the Kutupalong Rohingya Refugee Camp attend school.

they forcibly redrew the political map of the world without regard for local realities of ethnicity, language, history, village, or family life.

Of the nearly 200 nation-states in the world today, fewer than one-third existed in their current form fifty years ago. Dozens of states, including Myanmar, were created after World War II as nationalist movements won independence from European and Japanese colonial powers in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. Dozens more were created in central Asia and eastern Europe following the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the breakdown of previously socialist states in the 1990s. Only a handful of the nation-states that exist today date back to the nineteenth century, and almost none have existed for more than 200 years, certainly not in their present form. As a result, most newly formed countries now encompass multiple ethnicities and identities within state borders that previously did not exist (Robbins and Dowty 2019).

Today, Myanmar is a conglomeration of territories and people largely consolidated by the British in the nineteenth century. Myanmar's Rakhine State, home to the majority of Rohingya, had previously been a wide-open, largely autonomous, rural frontier area that straddled the Burmese and Bengali worlds. But when the British added Myanmar to their sprawling British Indian empire, they imposed rigid new borders and governing structures. Across the globe, including in the case of Rwanda, which we will consider later in the chapter, colonial rulers strengthened their political control by enforcing a rigid system of ethnic classification, discouraging interaction between groups, and pitting one group against another. Ethnic identities and political borders that had once been quite fluid became formal and hard. At independence, Myanmar inherited a territory and a population cobbled together under British rule, not one that had organically emerged from local realities of group, religious, or linguistic identity.

The story of the Rohingya opens avenues for exploring the complex intersection of ethnicity, nationalism, colonialism, the nation-state, and citizenship from an anthropological perspective. In particular, we will ask three key questions:

- What does "ethnicity" mean to anthropologists?
- How and why is ethnicity created, mobilized, and contested?
- What is the relationship of ethnicity to the nation?

After reading this chapter, you will have the tools to understand and analyze the role of ethnicity and nationalism in your own life and in communities and countries worldwide.

What Does "Ethnicity" Mean to Anthropologists?

» Define ethnicity and ethnic identity from an anthropological perspective.

We hear the word *ethnicity* all the time. The press reports on "long-held ethnic conflicts" that shatter the peace in Rwanda, Iraq, India, and the former Yugoslavia. We check boxes on college applications and U.S. census forms to identify our ethnicity or race. We shop in the "ethnic foods" aisle of our super-sized grocery store to find refried beans, soy sauce, pita, and wasabi. Our use of *ethnicity* is not particularly consistent or terribly clear. In recent years in the United States, *ethnicity* has been increasingly substituted for *race* when describing group differences, perhaps to deflect attention from difficult discussions about racism. *Ethnic* is often paired with *minority*, a term signifying a smaller group that differs from the dominant, majority culture in language, food, dress, immigrant history, national origin, or religion. But this usage ignores the ethnic identity of the majority. The same lack of clarity is true for our use of the terms *nation*, *nationalism*, and *nation-state*, all of which often blur together and at times seem indistinguishable from *ethnicity*.

Ethnicity as Identity

Over a lifetime, humans develop complex identities that connect to many people in many ways. We build a sense of relationship, belonging, and shared identity through connections to family, religion, hometown, language, shared history, citizenship, sports, age, gender, sexuality, education, and profession. These powerful identities influence what we eat, who we date, where we work, how we live, and even how we die. **Ethnicity** is one of the most powerful identities that humans develop: It is a sense of connection to a group of people whom we believe share a common history, culture, and (sometimes) ancestry and who are distinct from others outside the group (Ericksen 2010; Jenkins 1996). Ethnicity can be seen as a more expansive version of kinship—the culturally specific creation of relatives—that includes a much larger group and extends further in space and time. As we will see in this chapter, the construction of ethnicity, like the construction of kinship, is quite complicated, moving well beyond easy equation with biological ancestry. In this chapter, we will explore the ways ethnicity may be perceived, felt, and imagined by a group as well as the ways it may be imposed on a group by others.

ethnicity: A sense of historical, cultural, and sometimes ancestral connection to a group of people who are imagined to be distinct from those outside the group.

With the intensification of globalization and the increasing flows of people, goods, and ideas across borders, one might anticipate that the power of ethnicity to frame people's actions and to influence world events would diminish. Instead, ethnicity seems to be flourishing—rising in prominence in both local

and global affairs. Why is it so powerful? When threatened or challenged, people often turn to local alliances for support, safety, and protection. Ethnicity is one of the strongest sources of solidarity available.

As the effects of globalization intersect with systems of power at the local level, many people turn to ethnic networks and expressions of ethnic identity to protect their way of life in the face of intense pressures of homogenization. Ethnicity can also serve political purposes on the national and local levels. As we will see later in this chapter, political elites and other social actors may impose or enforce ethnic distinctions or use calls for ethnic solidarity to mobilize support against perceived enemies inside and outside the nation-state. Rather than diminishing in the face of globalization, ethnicity emerges even more powerfully in specific situations of conflict, tension, and opportunity.

Creating Ethnic Identity

Anthropologists see ethnicity as a cultural construction, not as a natural formation based on biology or inherent human nature. Fredrik Barth (1969) describes ethnicity as the "social organization of cultural difference." In other words, people construct a sense of ethnicity as they organize themselves in relation to others whom they perceive as either culturally similar or culturally different. Ethnic identity starts with what people believe about themselves and how others see them. It begins to form early and continues to take shape throughout our lives. People learn, practice, and teach ethnicity. Anthropologists who study it seek to understand how it is created and reinforced, how boundaries are constructed, how group identity is shaped, and how differences with others are mobilized and perpetuated (Jenkins 2008). Who do you consider to be in your ethnic group? Who belongs to a different group?

In what ways do stories, paintings, and even Thanksgiving turkey floats help create an American ethnic identity? (*left*) A 1914 depiction of the first Thanksgiving at Plymouth, Massachusetts, often assumed to have occurred 300 years earlier. (*right*) Native American scholar and activist Vine Deloria Jr., whose book *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* challenges popular versions of the American origin myth.

origin myth: A story told about the founding and history of a particular group to reinforce a sense of common identity.

Ethnic identity is taught and reinforced in a number of ways. One key method is through the creation and telling of **origin myths.** By myth, we do not mean a fable or a legend but rather a story with meaning. In the United States, the "American" origin myth includes stories of historical events—such as the landing of the *Mayflower*, the first Thanksgiving, the Boston Tea Party, the American Revolution, the Civil War, the settling of the West—that are retold to emphasize a shared destiny as well as shared values of freedom, exploration, individualism, and multiculturalism. The American origin myth of the first Thanksgiving is ritually enacted each year with a national holiday. Schoolchildren produce dramas and artwork based on textbook stories. Families gather to feast, usually eating certain traditional foods. Nationally televised parades and sporting events add to the ritual's celebratory character. However, origin myths—like all elements of culture—are continuously promoted, revised, and negotiated. For example, recent years have seen more open discussion of the brutal conquest of Native Americans by European colonial settlers (Deloria 1969; Dunbar-Ortiz 2015) and, in books such as Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* (2005), more challenges to classic representations of the American origin myth.

ethnic boundary marker: A practice or belief used to signify who is in a group and who is not; usually not clearly fixed or defined and may change over time.

People create and promote certain **ethnic boundary markers** in an attempt to signify who is in an ethnic group and who is not. These may include a collective name; shared cultural practices such as food, clothing, and architecture; belief in a common history and ancestors; association with a particular territory; a shared language or religion; and an imagination of shared physical characteristics. But ethnic boundaries are usually not clearly fixed or defined. No group is completely homogeneous: Not everyone imagined to be inside the group is the same, and not everyone imagined to be outside the group is noticeably different. Group boundaries can be quite porous, as people move between groups through marriage, migration, and adoption. Identity, including ethnic identity, can be fluid and flexible, reflecting shifting alliances and strength over time and according to need. Groups may vanish in situations of war or violence. New ethnic groups may come into existence when part of an existing group splits off or two groups form a new one (Ericksen 2010).

situational negotiation of identity: An individual's self-identification with a particular group that can shift according to social location.

Because ethnicity is not biologically fixed, self-identification with a particular ethnic group can change according to one's social location. This occurs through a process called **situational negotiation of identity.** For example, the Rohingya in our chapter-opening story might have chosen to be Rohingya, Burmese, Muslim, or simply residents of Rakhine State. At different points during their lives, they may choose to identify with any of these, depending on the situation. Have you ever had the experience of identifying with a different aspect of your identity as you moved between groups or locations?

Constructing Indian Identity in the United States The immigration experience profoundly affects ethnicity and ethnic identification. New immigrants reshape their home-country ethnic identification to build alliances and solidarity in their new host country. In her book *From the Ganges to the Hudson* (1995), anthropologist Johanna Lessinger explores how a new Indian ethnic identity is created and publicly demonstrated through consumption, public festivals, and Indian immigrant media in New York City. Indian immigrants arrive in New York from all corners of their homeland, speaking different languages, following diverse cultural practices and religions, and reflecting class and caste stratifications. In India, a country of more than 1.2 billion people, these individuals would identify with different ethnicities shaped by geography, language, food, and cultural practices. But in New York, they all begin the process of becoming Indian American.

MAP 6.2
New York/India

New York City's Little India, a bustling shopping district in Jackson Heights, Queens, has become the symbolic center of Indian immigrant life and a key to the construction of Indian ethnic identity in the United States. Vibrant with the sights, sounds, and smells of India, the streets are lined with Indian grocery and spice shops, Indian restaurants, clothing and jewelry stores, travel agencies, music and video distributors, and electronics stores. Indian immigrants come from all parts of New York City and the metropolitan region to walk the streets of Little India and shop, eat, and take in the many symbols of "home."

Here, Indian immigrants have created a wide-ranging infrastructure—including ethnic associations, religious temples, cultural societies, newspapers, television programming, and major public festivals—that supports and promotes the construction of a unified Indian ethnic identity in their new homeland. One of the largest festivals is the India Day Parade held in late August to mark India's nationhood and independence from British colonialism. Like the dozens of ethnic parade celebrations in New York each year, Indian immigrant community organizations, business owners, and hometown associations sponsor marching bands, singers, dancers, banners, and a vast array of colorful floats. Holding a public festival like the India Day Parade is a powerful way to stake a claim to a place in the multiethnic mosaic that is New York—to send a clear signal to all New Yorkers, including the political establishment, that Indians are here, are organized, and want to be taken seriously.

The India Day Parade in New York City helps to construct an Indian American identity in the United States.

Ethnic boundaries are often fluid, messy, and contested. For example, exactly who is Indian American? For more than fifteen years, until 2010, the South Asian Lesbian and Gay Alliance (SALGA) requested permission to march in the India Day Parade only to be denied by parade organizers. Members of SALGA held demonstrations each year along the parade route, holding signs that read, "We are also Indians!" Despite the parade organizers' desire to build a broad-based Indian American identity and coalition, they were willing to declare SALGA not Indian enough to participate in the event. In this situation, sexuality became a more powerful boundary marker than country of origin or ethnic identity. The public rift over the India Day Parade symbolized the contestation of ethnic boundary markers—a struggle that deeply divides many Indian immigrants and their children—and the debate involved in defining who is Indian in the United States.

How and Why Is Ethnicity Created, Mobilized, and Contested?

» Describe how ethnicity is created and activated rather than biologically determined.

Ethnicity is not necessarily a pressing matter in the daily lives of many of the world's people, but it can be activated when power relationships undergo negotiation in a community or a nation. In times like these, people call on shared ideas of ethnicity to rally others to participate in their causes, whether those causes involve ensuring self-protection, building alliances, constructing economic networks, or establishing a country. Ethnicity can also be activated by charismatic entrepreneurs of ethnicity who seek support from co-ethnics in their fight for political, economic, or military power against real or perceived enemies. The sections that follow illustrate how ethnicity can be harnessed for either harmful or beneficial outcomes.

Ethnicity as a Source of Conflict

Anthropologists explore the complex ways culture can be invented, transformed into ethnicity, and mobilized in situations of ethnic conflict (Eller 1999). The anthropological study of ethnic conflict requires an open-mindedness to new ideas of how ethnicity is formed and how it works—ideas that may be at odds with our everyday usage of the terms *ethnicity* and *ethnic groups*. Rogers Brubaker, in his book *Ethnicity without Groups* (2004), warns against "groupism" when studying ethnicity. Anthropologists may anticipate that we will work with clearly defined, homogenous groups that have fixed boundaries and will act in a

unified fashion. But this is not what we find when we explore ethnicity on the local level. Ethnicity is much more complicated, involving people with many perspectives, disagreements, and at times competing loyalties. The strong bonds of ethnicity that we associate with ethnic groups may wax and wane.

Why do the power and intensity of ethnicity sometimes crystallize into ethnic conflict? To answer this question, Brubaker encourages paying attention to ethnic group-making projects, such as those we will see in the cases of Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. Such projects occur when **identity entrepreneurs**—political, military, and religious leaders—promote a worldview through the lens of ethnicity. They use war, propaganda, and state power to mobilize people against those whom they perceive as dangerous. Ethnicity may not actually be the problem. Rather, the struggle for wealth and power uses the convenient narrative of ethnic difference to galvanize a population to collective action. Once the wedge of ethnic difference has been driven into a population and used to achieve power, it can be self-perpetuating and extremely difficult to undo. In these instances, ethnic conflict may intensify into violent acts, including **genocide**—the deliberate and systematic destruction of an ethnic or religious group (Eller 1999; Ericksen 2010; Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2004).

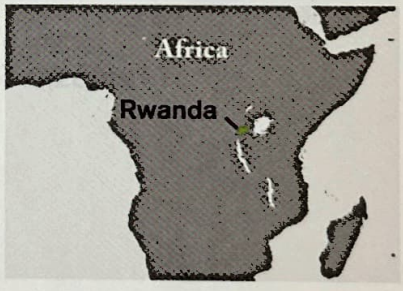
identity entrepreneurs: Political, military, or religious leaders who promote a worldview through the lens of ethnicity and use war, propaganda, and state power to mobilize people against those whom they perceive as a danger.

genocide: The deliberate and systematic destruction of an ethnic or religious group.

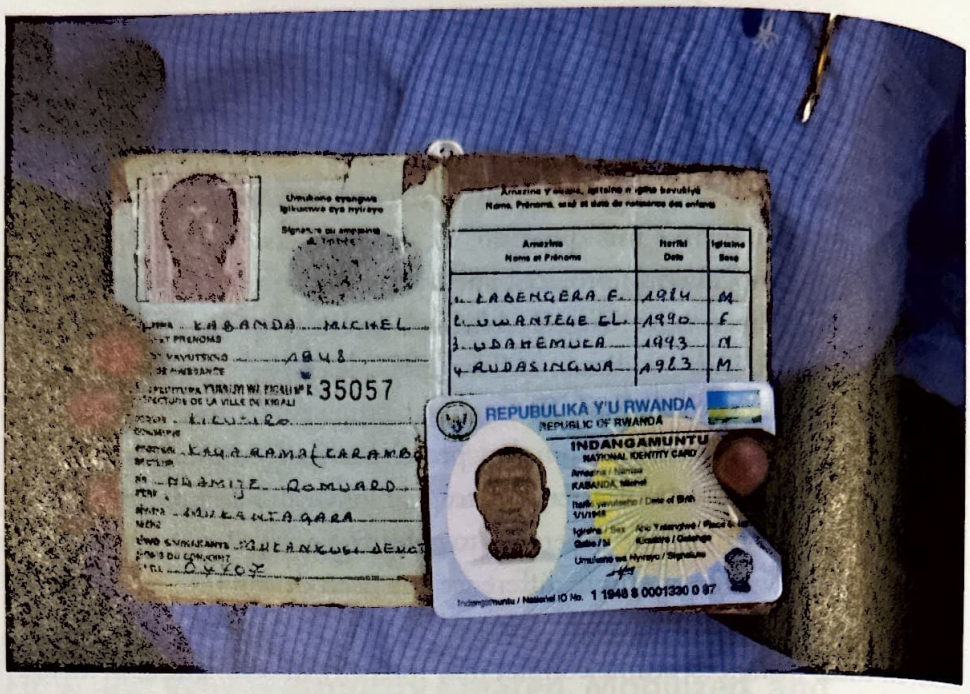
Mobilizing Ethnic Differences in Rwanda In 1994, the East African country of Rwanda was shattered by a horrific genocide involving two main groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi. Over a few months, as many as 1 million Tutsi and an unknown number of moderate Hutu died in a slaughter perpetrated by extremist Hutu death squads. In a country of only 7 million people before the genocide, where Hutu made up 85 percent of the population and Tutsi 15 percent, how did this tragic genocide occur? How did Tutsi and Hutu, who have lived together in the region for generations and centuries, come to perceive such clear differences between them and choose to act on those differences in such violent ways?

Before the imposition of German and Belgian colonial rule in the early twentieth century, Hutu and Tutsi were distinguished mainly by occupation and social status. Hutu were primarily farmers; Tutsi were cattle owners. The two groups shared a common language and religious affiliations. Intermarriage was quite common. Children of mixed marriages inherited their father's identity. Although Tutsi were later stereotyped as taller and thinner than Hutu, it is not possible to distinguish between members of the two groups by looks alone.

It was common practice among colonial governments worldwide to choose one native group to serve as the educated, privileged intermediaries between the local population and the colonial administration. In Rwanda, the Belgian colonial government (1919–62) elevated Tutsi to the most influential positions in society—to the exclusion of Hutu leaders. In an attempt to rationalize its



MAP 6.3
Rwanda



Rwandan identity cards listing each citizen's ethnic identity were discontinued only in 1996 after the genocide of as many as 1 million Tutsi.

prejudicial behavior, in the 1920s the Belgian colonial government hired scientists to measure Hutu and Tutsi anatomy—including skull size—so as to physically differentiate between the two groups. These flawed studies, based on the Western pseudoscience of eugenics, declared that Tutsi were taller, bigger brained, and lighter skinned—closer in physical form to Europeans and thus "naturally" suited to the role assigned to them by the Belgian colonial government.

To maintain and enforce this segregation, in 1933 the Belgian colonial government issued national identity cards that included the category "ethnicity." Even after independence in 1962, Rwandan officials continued to use the identity cards, forcing all citizens to be labeled as Hutu, Tutsi, Twa (a small minority population), or naturalized (born outside Rwanda). The cards were discontinued only in 1996 after the genocide.

Many Hutu resented the Belgians' decision to elevate the Tutsi to power in the colonial government. Periodic protests in the early years of colonial occupation were followed by a major uprising against Tutsi elites in 1956. In 1959, the Hutu seized power and forced many Tutsi into exile in neighboring countries. At independence in 1962, the Hutu consolidated power and implemented repressive policies toward the Tutsi. A full-blown civil war erupted in 1990. Subsequently, a 1993 United Nations–backed cease-fire collapsed when a plane carrying the Rwandan president, a Hutu, was shot down in April 1994.

What followed was an extensive genocide campaign by Hutu extremists who blamed the Tutsi for the death of their president. Rwandan radio

broadcast instructions to kill all Tutsi, including spouses and family members, as well as any Hutu moderates who were unwilling to cooperate. Hutu civilian death squads implemented the "Hutu Power" genocide program, a deliberate and seemingly long-planned extermination of Tutsi. Tutsi and moderate Hutu were killed largely by hand with machetes and clubs after local officials gathered them up into schools and churches. Hutu death squads used the Rwandan identity cards to identify Tutsi victims for extermination.

What role did ethnicity play in the Rwandan genocide? Western press and government reports referred to the extermination as "tribal violence," the result of "ancient ethnic hatreds" and a failed nation-state. However, we can see how colonial European policies constructed and enforced notions of difference between Hutu and Tutsi—including notions of physical and mental difference—that were not deep-rooted historical patterns but that nonetheless later served to rationalize genocide (Mamdani 2002). Indeed, the twentieth-century history of Rwanda reveals how local ethnic relationships can be broken down and reconstituted in enduring ways by a foreign superpower that weaponizes ethnicity to divide and rule—and how those new patterns of ethnicity can be mobilized to fuel a struggle for economic, political, and military power (Eller 1999).

Remaking Identity: Hutu Refugees in Tanzania In neighboring Burundi, where Tutsi outnumber Hutu, a series of massacres in the 1970s drove many Hutu refugees to Tanzania. Anthropologist Liisa Malkki's ethnography *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (1995) focuses on the lives of Hutu refugees in a remote resettlement camp and their experiences of atrocity, displacement, and exile. Through a year of fieldwork, Malkki collected dozens of life histories, which she calls mythico-histories—stories through which refugees worked to remake sense of their past, present, and future.

Through these mythico-histories, Hutu refugees reimagined their conceptions of community, history, and ethnic identity, often in stark contrast to both Tutsi accounts of the conflict and Western accounts of the colonial history in Rwanda and Burundi. Hutu instead described how their essential nature had emerged through the experience of atrocity and exile. Their stories told not of victims and outcasts but of a distinct Hutu people with a long history as Burundians, while the Tutsi were foreign usurpers. In their narratives, the trials of dispossession and dislocation prepared their "nation in exile" for a restoration to Burundi. To reinforce this sense of Hutu identity, refugees held to certain purity practices while in exile—discouraging intermarriage, preserving their language, and acquiring official recognition as refugees rather than blending into the surrounding Tanzanian community.

MAP 6.4
Tanzania

By recounting Hutu refugees' mythico-histories, Malkki sheds light on the dilemmas of displaced people in a world that assumes the nation-state is the natural frame for viewing ethnicity and ethnic identity. In the process, she captures the creative strategies that displaced people deploy to sustain themselves and imagine a better future. When considering the intersections of ethnicity, ethnic conflict, and the nation-state, Malkki urges us to move beyond easy explanations of contemporary conflicts as inevitable or natural outcomes of ancient tribal hatreds. Instead, Malkki's work pushes us to see the complex histories and processes of identity making that are often obscured by labels like "refugee" and "ethnic conflict" (Haugerud 1998; Malkki 1995; Roseberry 1997).

Orchestrating Ethnic Conflict in the Former Yugoslavia The disintegration of the former Yugoslavia in the late 1980s and early 1990s catalyzed a devastating civil war that harnessed ethnicity as a powerful weapon of conflict and hatred. The war began in 1992 among Catholic Croats, Orthodox Christian Serbs, and Bosnian Muslims as national political leaders scrambled for control over land and power. The region is one of the most ethnically diverse in the world, and the area's national boundaries have shifted constantly over the past 150 years. But in direct contrast to journalistic accounts of the 1992–95 war, which traced the conflict's origins to ancient ethnic hatreds that condemned the country's people to an endless cycle of violence, Norwegian anthropologist Tone Bringa has offered a different perspective. In her ethnography *Being Muslim the Bosnian Way* (1995), she declares, "The war was not created by those villagers. . . . The war has been orchestrated from places where the people I lived and worked among were not represented and where their voices were not heard" (5).

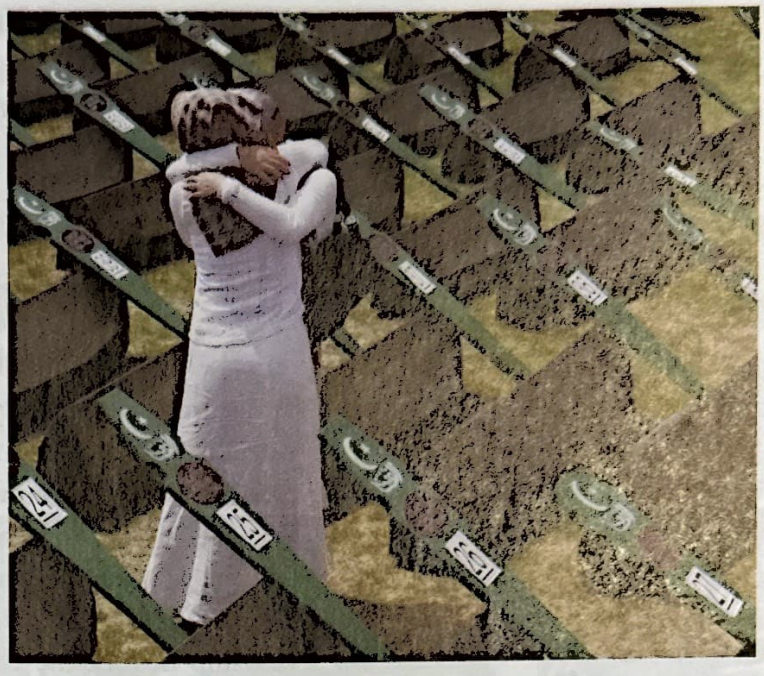
MAP 6.5
Bosnia

Bringa began her fieldwork in 1987 in a diverse Muslim-Catholic village in central Bosnia. She carefully describes the integrated social structures of daily village life—including the roles of women, religion, and the family—and pays particular attention to how Muslims practiced their faith. Bringa did not find a village populated with people who had always hated one another. They spoke the same language, went to school together, traded in the same local market, and shared village life as friends and neighbors. Bringa pointedly notes that despite the usual tensions any small community would face, these people of different faiths had lived together peacefully for 500 years.

Significant change occurred in the community during the short time of Bringa's fieldwork. When she began her research, local Muslims based their identity on differences in religious practices from those of their Catholic neighbors. The emphasis was on practices such as scheduling of worship, prayer, and holiday celebrations, not on religious beliefs and convictions. However, these perceptions of self and others changed as war broke out and state leaders

imposed new ethnic and cultural policies. Gradually, local Muslims were forced to identify less with their local community and more with the religious beliefs of other Bosnian Muslims, and they had to turn to the outside Muslim world as a source of solidarity and support.

When Bringa returned to the village in the spring of 1993—revealed in riveting scenes from her documentary film *Bosnia: We Are All Neighbors* (1993)—to her horror, she found that almost every Muslim home had been destroyed by Croat forces with assistance from local Croat men of the village. All 400 Muslims in the village (two-thirds of its population) had fled, been killed, or been placed in concentration camps. **Ethnic cleansing**—efforts of one ethnic or religious group to remove or destroy another group in a particular geographic area—had shattered the dynamic and peaceful fabric of village life that had prevailed only a few years earlier. As Bringa writes in the preface to her book, "My anthropological training had not prepared me to deal with the very rapid and total disintegration of the community. . . . [T]his war has made sense neither to the anthropologist nor to the people who taught her about their way of life" (Bringa 1995, xviii). Her second documentary, *Returning Home: Revival of a Bosnian Village* (Bringa and Loizos 2002), examines the return of some of the Muslim refugees and the attempt to reconstruct the village life that was destroyed by civil war. In Bringa's account of Bosnian village life, we can see the vulnerability of local ethnic identities to manipulation by outside political and military forces (Coles 2007; Eller 1999).



Bosnian Muslim women comfort one another near coffins of family members, victims of "ethnic cleansing," exhumed from a nearby mass grave.

ethnic cleansing: Efforts by representatives of one ethnic or religious group to remove or destroy another group in a particular geographic area.

Ethnicity as a Source of Opportunity

Ethnicity is not only mobilized to rally support in times of conflict, as we have seen in the examples of Rwanda, Tanzania, and Bosnia. Ethnicity can also be mobilized to create opportunities, including economic opportunities both locally and globally. People eat at ethnic restaurants, listen to ethnic music, and decorate their homes and offices with ethnic furnishings. Some ethnic groups are branding themselves and becoming ethno-corporations in order to capitalize on their ethnicity. Ethno–theme parks, cultural villages, and ecotourism all promote the ethnic experience to attract investors and customers (Chio 2014; Nelson 1999). (In contrast, for an example of a majority group's marketing of minority theme parks, see the group of images on the following page.) On a global scale, ethnicity is being creatively packaged and produced

for a multi-billion-dollar global market: food, clothing, music, fashion, and cultural artifacts. Perhaps you have even some "ethnic" items in your dorm or at home. In the following example of Puerto Rican migrant workers in the United States, we consider ways ethnicity may be creatively activated by immigrants to fuel local economic enterprises.

Puerto Rican Farmworkers, Ethnicity, and United States Agriculture In *Colonial Migrants at the Heart of Empire: Puerto Rican Workers on U.S. Farms* (2020), anthropologist Ismael García-Colón draws upon decades of fieldwork to document the history of Puerto Rican laborers on mainland U.S. farms. Of particular interest are the strategies these workers use to construct ethnic identities and ethnic communities amid rural U.S. communities where their presence has often been unwelcome. Puerto Rico has been a U.S. colonial territory since 1898, when the United States claimed the Caribbean island and its people in the Spanish-American War. Though Puerto Ricans were granted U.S. citizenship in 1917, the United States has refused to recognize Puerto Rico as a state. As a result, Puerto Rican farmworkers have an ambiguous status on the mainland. Despite their citizenship and the essential farmwork they provide, Puerto Ricans have often been seen as outsiders to mainstream American society.

García-Colón's research focuses on one of a number of significant waves of Puerto Rican migration to cities and more rural communities. Beginning in 1948, hundreds of thousands of rural, often poor, Puerto Rican farmers responded to an aggressive program to recruit them as laborers on mainland U.S. farms. Over the following decades, the Farm Labor Program—a collaboration between the Puerto Rican and U.S. governments—filled U.S. farm labor shortages by contracting and transporting Puerto Rican farmers, often as seasonal workers, to grow and harvest everything from apples, mushrooms, and potatoes to cranberries and tobacco on orchards and farms up and down the Eastern Seaboard. As a government initiative, the Farm Labor Program established relatively generous labor contracts for Puerto Rican workers that assured their preferential hiring ahead of undocumented immigrants and noncitizen guest workers. Ironically, however, employers often avoided hiring Puerto Rican workers because of their citizenship status, fearing that they would be harder to control than more vulnerable undocumented workers or guest workers.

The arrival of Puerto Rican migrant farmworkers in predominantly White, rural communities contributed significantly to the Latinization of the U.S. farm labor force. It also drew considerable resistance from many local residents. Puerto Rican farmworkers sought economic opportunities for themselves and their families, aspiring to the American dream of social mobility and a middle-class lifestyle. Despite their U.S. citizenship status and

Each year, half a million tourists visit the Dai Minority Park in China's southwestern Yunnan Province. This is one of many ethno-parks owned and operated by members of China's Han majority (96 percent of the population), who market the nation's fifty-five ethnic minorities to a primarily middle-class Han clientele (Chio 2014). Here, tourists can live in Dai-style houses, eat ethnic meals, and participate in reenactments of ritual celebrations such as the water festival, pictured here, originally an annual three-day festival but now performed every day for the entertainment of visitors. How might ethno–theme parks benefit the Chinese government's goal of national unity? How do you think they affect the local communities?

their essential role in the farm economy, however, their position as Spanish-speaking, mixed-race, culturally Latino colonial subjects commonly marked them as outsiders. Puerto Rican migrants living in rural communities, where they were often the first non-White residents, commonly faced hostility and marginalization, surveillance and violence. Faced with unsafe and unfair working conditions, withholding of wages, or threats and intimidation, many

workers simply abandoned their contracts, relocated to U.S. cities, or migrated back to Puerto Rico.

Colonial Migrants at the Heart of Empire focuses significant attention on the labor conditions experienced by Puerto Rican migrant farmworkers. As García-Colón documents, many lived in grim labor camps on the farms, where they worked, ate, lived, shopped, and sought entertainment. Isolated on farm property, these labor camps kept a largely unwanted population invisible to the broader public. The all-encompassing nature of the camps circumscribed the workers' social and economic activity, making them more vulnerable to employer tactics such as overcharging for food and other goods while short-changing wages.

García-Colón recounts the ways that, despite employer exploitation and marginalization within the broader rural community, Puerto Rican migrant workers used these farm labor camps as centers of resistance and organizing efforts to improve local working conditions. Mobilization among extended family and friendship networks was key. So were strategies to create and mobilize a sense of shared ethnic identity amid the largely White, rural communities where farmworkers experienced prejudice and racism almost on a daily basis. Farmworkers also drew upon their ethnic bonds to create ethnic-based businesses, particularly in the service and food industries, that kept financial resources within the community. This ethnic infrastructure allowed the Puerto Rican community to support one another and provided alternatives to the exploitative farm labor camp conditions.

The desire for Puerto Rican foods created one such opportunity for ethnic mobilization. The food provided by farm owners in the labor camps was often unfamiliar, tasteless, and boring. An extensive network of small Puerto Rican food entrepreneurs and businesses quickly emerged around the camps, and these enterprises, in turn, supported a related network of small businesses to supply the food sellers. This ethnic infrastructure not only provided an alternative to the owners' tightly controlled labor camp food system but also established employment opportunities outside of farm labor. Furthermore, by creating an alternative, ethnic-oriented economy, Puerto Rican farm laborers were able to build upon ties of ethnic solidarity to keep more money within their community rather than pouring it back into the farm labor camp system.

Although the flow of Puerto Rican farm labor into the United States has declined in recent years, thousands continue to pursue these opportunities and experience the difficulties of being an outsider in their own country. Their journeys, including their creative efforts to mobilize ethnic identities and infrastructures, provide key insights into the complex experiences of Latinos in the rural United States today.

Assimilation versus Multiculturalism: Ethnic Interaction in the United States

The United States has an extremely complicated history when it comes to people of different geographic origins, religions, skin colors, and ethnic backgrounds. The relationship of "ethnic" and "American" (as applied to the United States) remains controversial today. From the outset, immigration from various regions in Europe, the enslavement and forced migration of Africans, and the conquest of Native American peoples made the United States one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. But these diverse groups and additional waves of immigrants over the past 200 years have experienced vastly different paths to incorporation into U.S. culture. In fact, these paths have often followed color lines that divide people of lighter and darker complexions and that came to be rigidly enforced as race.

Scholars for many years used the **melting pot** metaphor to describe the standard path into U.S. culture. In the melting pot, cultural minorities adopt the patterns and norms of the dominant culture and eventually cease to exist as separate groups—a process scholars call **assimilation.** Eventually, all cooked in the same pot, diverse groups become assimilated into one big stew. According to this metaphor, tens of millions of European immigrants from dozens of countries with myriad languages, cultures, and religious practices have been transformed into ethnic Whites through marriage, work, education, and the use of English.

melting pot: A metaphor used to describe the process of immigrant assimilation into U.S. dominant culture.

assimilation: The process through which cultural minorities accept the patterns and norms of the dominant culture and cease to exist as separate groups.

But in reality, the melting pot has never been completely successful in the United States, even for people of European descent. The creation of Whiteness, as we saw in Chapter 5, was often contentious and difficult, marked by intense rivalries and violence. Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's landmark study *Beyond the Melting Pot* (1970) found a failure to reach complete assimilation among European immigrants and their descendants as late as the third generation. And many scholars suggest that the melting pot metaphor never meaningfully represented the experiences of Native Americans and people of African descent.

The incredibly diverse flows of immigration to the United States since 1965 have made earlier, familiar categories increasingly inadequate to capture the rapidly shifting ethnic character of the nation's population today. For many Africans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian immigrants, the United States has resisted their assimilation into the dominant culture, regardless of their educational level or socioeconomic status. Yet, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 13 (on race and migration, respectively), immigrants and their children are creating new ethnic identities and new ways of becoming American. Today, a multiculturalist narrative competes with the melting pot metaphor to represent the role of ethnicity in U.S. culture. **Multiculturalism** refers to the process

multiculturalism: A pattern of ethnic relations in which new immigrants and their children enculturate into the dominant national culture yet retain an ethnic culture.

Your Turn: Fieldwork

Seeing the Business of Ethnicity

Anthropologists examine the many ways that ethnicities and ethnic identities can be invented, performed, and changed over time and according to one's social location. Now it's your turn.

Let's consider how ethnicities may be constructed and put to work in an everyday setting. Plan a fieldwork visit to a restaurant that you consider to be identified with a particular ethnicity. Drawing on your skills of participant observation, take careful field notes of the ways you see ethnicity being constructed and performed, either consciously or unconsciously. Before you visit, take a moment to think about what preconceived notions or expectations you already have about this ethnic group.

At this restaurant, what makes you feel like you are having an authentic "ethnic" experience? Consider the food and beverages. Are there unique ingredients, styles of preparation, smells, colors, condiments, or desserts? Is the food presented in a special manner, with distinct platters, utensils, plates, glasses? Consider the restaurant staff. What is unique about their national origins, language use, clothing, mannerisms, or style of self-presentation? Consider the décor. What do you notice about the architecture, signage, restaurant name, interior décor, place mats, pictures, colors, lighting, music, plants?

To dig deeper and to begin to analyze your observations, request an interview with the owner or manager—someone who can provide an overview of the business. Start by asking the following:

- What makes your restaurant unique in terms of ethnicity or ethnic identity?
- How is this restaurant the same or different from ones in your place of origin?
- Do you think your displays of ethnicity help (or hurt) your restaurant's sales?
- If the restaurant were more like those "back home," would that help or hurt sales? Why?
- Where do you find or purchase your markers of ethnic identity: food, decorations, staff?
- Do you share an ethnic identity with the people who provide your supplies, equipment, and personnel?

Ask if it would be appropriate to take pictures of elements that particularly perform or represent ethnic identity.

Compare your field notes and findings with a classmate. Compare your pre-visit assumptions with what you actually observed. Discuss the similar and different ways ethnicity was put to work, consciously or unconsciously, in your field site.

through which new immigrants and their children enculturate into the dominant national culture and yet retain an ethnic culture. In multiculturalism, both identities may be held at the same time.

Tensions over which model should become dominant in the U.S. ethnicity story—assimilation or multiculturalism—are constantly rising to the surface. For example, White nationalist movements promote anti-immigrant laws and violence. Attempts to establish English as the official language of towns, states,

and even the U.S. federal government can be seen as an effort to mandate language assimilation into the melting pot and a reassertion of the dominant culture's centrality against the growing trend toward multiculturalism (Rumbaut and Portes 2001).

What Is the Relationship of Ethnicity to the Nation?

» Explain how ethnicity and the nation are related.

Almost all people today imagine themselves as part of a nation-state. But this has not always been the case. **States**—regional structures of political, economic, and military rule—have existed for thousands of years, beginning in the regions now known as Iraq, China, and India. But the nation-state is a relatively new development. The term signifies more than a geographic territory with borders enforced by a central government. **Nation-state** assumes a distinct political entity whose population shares a sense of culture, ancestry, and destiny as a people. **Citizenship** refers to legal membership in a nation-state. Though the term **nation** once was used to describe a group of people who shared a place of origin, today the word *nation* is often used interchangeably with *nation-state*. **Nationality** is an identification with a group of people thought to share a place of origin. **Nationalism** emerges when a sense of ethnic community combines with a desire to create and maintain a nation-state in a location where that sense of common destiny can be lived out (Gellner 1983; Hearn 2006; Wolf 2001).

state: An autonomous regional structure of political, economic, and military rule with a central government authorized to make laws and use force to maintain order and defend its territory.

nation-state: A political entity, located within a geographic territory with enforced borders, where the population shares a sense of culture, ancestry, and destiny as a people.

citizenship: Legal membership in a nation-state.

nation: A term once used to describe a group of people who shared a place of origin; now used interchangeably with nation-state.

nationality: An identification with a group of people thought to share a place of origin.

nationalism: The desire of an ethnic community to create and/or maintain a nation-state.

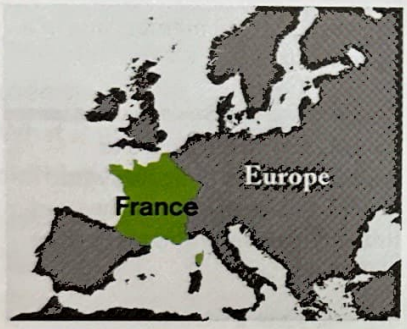
Imagined Communities and Invented Traditions

Across the world over the past 200 years, people have shifted their primary associations and identifications from family, village, town, and city to an almost universal identification with a nation or the desire to create a nation. Yet despite our contemporary assumptions that identifying with an ethnic group or a nation is a tradition with a deep history, anthropological research reveals that most ethnic groups and nations are recent historical creations, that our connection to people within these groups is recently imagined, and that our shared traditions are recently invented.

Political scientist Benedict Anderson (1983) conceived of the nation as an **imagined community.** He called it "imagined" because almost all of the people within it have never met and most likely will never meet. They may be separated by sharp divisions of class, politics, or religion and yet imagine themselves to have a common heritage and collective responsibility to one another and their nation. This sense of membership in an imagined national community can be strong enough to lead people into battle to protect their shared

imagined community: The invented sense of connection and shared traditions that underlies identification with a particular ethnic group or nation whose members likely will never all meet.

French classroom, 1829. What role can education play in creating a sense of common nationality?



MAP 6.6
France

interests. Anderson's conception of imagined communities has become an essential analytical tool for thinking about nations and nationalism.

Historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983) suggest that nations are not ancient configurations but instead are recent constructions with invented traditions. Nations may evoke a sense of deep history and inspire a broad sense of unity, but they are, in fact, relatively new. For example, we imagine the French nation-state to have a deep and unitary history, but prior to the 1800s, the French were a scattered collection of urban and rural people who spoke different languages, celebrated different holidays and festivals, practiced different religions, and held primary loyalty not to the French state but to their city, town, village, or extended family. It was two national infrastructure projects, launched in the early 1800s, that ultimately played key roles in inventing a French nation.

First, a new education system was introduced on a national scale. Its textbooks promoted a shared sense of French history, and perhaps most important, all schools used the Parisian dialect of French as the medium of instruction. This created a standard national language—a lingua franca—that facilitated communication among the population. Second, the construction of an extensive network of roads and railways integrated rural areas into a national market economy. This new transportation infrastructure promoted the rapid flow of goods between agricultural and industrial sectors and allowed the regular movement of workers between countryside and city, thereby providing a national labor pool for France's growing economy. These national infrastructure projects proved crucial to transforming the diverse people living within the territorial boundaries of modern-day France into a French people with a common sense of identity, history, language, and tradition (Weber 1976).

Globalization and Transnational Citizenship in Eritrea Today, globalization is reshaping the ways in which nation-states operate and are experienced within and beyond their borders. For example, Victoria Bernal's ethnography *Nation as Network* (2014) explores the recent history of Eritrea, a small multiethnic nation in the Horn of Africa, and how Eritrean out-migration in recent

decades has combined with new media technologies to transform notions of the nation-state and citizenship. While these concepts have typically been rooted directly in national territory, Bernal's study suggests that in a rapidly globalizing world, they increasingly span and transgress national boundaries.

War and violence have been constant for Eritreans in recent decades, from the country's struggle for independence to ensuing border wars with neighboring states. The country's citizens have faced increasing militarization and repression by the Eritrean state, which the United Nations Human Rights Council (2011) criticized for arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture, extrajudicial executions, forced labor, and sexual abuse. Freedom of speech, press, assembly, and association are limited, and all citizens are required to participate in an indefinite period of national service.

Given these circumstances, tens of thousands of Eritreans have chosen to move abroad in search of economic opportunities and political stability. Scattered over many countries and continents, they have formed what immigration scholars call a **diaspora**—an extensive network of Eritreans living outside their ancestral homeland yet maintaining emotional and material ties to home—through which they continue to participate passionately in Eritrean politics and economic life. They send money to family members back home. They make investments. And through a dynamic network of websites, blogs, and social media, they connect with one another, debate Eritrean politics, mobilize actions and campaigns, and communicate their political views to the Eritrean state and a wider audience of nongovernmental organizations and human rights groups. Eritrean political and economic elites actively cultivate the diaspora's involvement and rely on their financial contributions to support Eritrea's welfare and warfare.

Bernal documents how the activities of the Eritrean diaspora create new opportunities to experiment with political expression, including dissent and other activities that would not be safe in Eritrea itself. New communication technologies enable Eritreans in diaspora to participate in a kind of "infopolitics" in which the management of information becomes a central aspect of power relations between the state and its citizens. Their online presence creates an alternative public sphere in which they can challenge Eritrea's authoritarian government, question the narratives of the country's mainstream media, and more generally undermine practices of secrecy and censorship. In the process, this transnational network of Eritreans participates robustly in the building of Eritrea as a nation—both in the struggle over Eritrean economic and political priorities and in the making and remaking of the conceptual boundaries of the Eritrean state, Eritrean citizenship, and Eritrean identity (Bernal 2014; Ivana 2015).

MAP 6.7
Eritrea

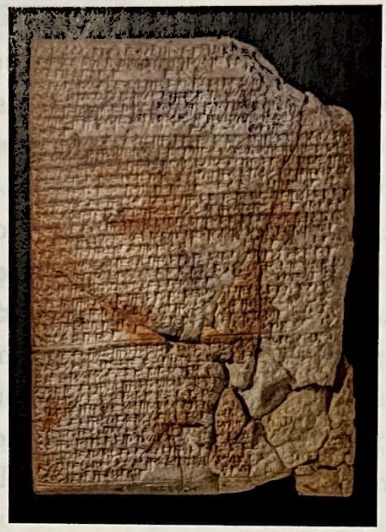
diaspora: A group of people who live outside their ancestral homeland yet maintain emotional and material ties to home.

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THINGS

Cookbooks: Recipes for Ethnic and National Identity

Does your family cook together? If so, where do the recipes come from? Are they handed down on note cards or through oral history? Are there favorite family cookbooks? So much of our deeply meaningful cultural life revolves around food: how it's grown, transported, and prepared; how we eat it and with whom; who has enough and who doesn't. Foods and experiences tied to food can profoundly shape our identities in the context of family, region, ethnicity, religion, or nationality. We can look at cookbooks as cultural documents. Though we find cookbooks around the world, each one is produced by a particular group at a particular time. They can carry and shape a group's history, memory, and identity across generations. They may reveal information about gender, race, region, politics, economic patterns, ethnicity, and nationalism. Cookbooks, if we learn to read them carefully, may tell unusual cultural tales.

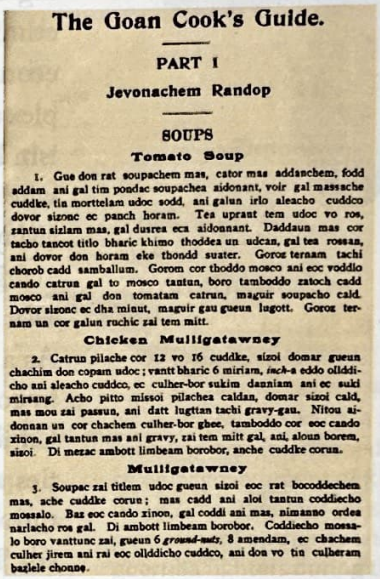
1 The oldest cookbooks date to at least 1730 BCE: Recipes carved in stone tablets offer preparation instructions for twenty-five stews, soups, and pies—many including beer as a key ingredient. Researchers suggest that these particular recipes were *haute* (high) *cuisine*, meals for royalty in the region of Mesopotamia—present-day Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq—written for the elite by the elite. Four thousand years later, these recipes reveal details of this advanced civilization: foodstuffs, spices, movement of ideas over space and time, writing, a concern with history, and the passing of information to future generations.



2 In 1330 CE, Hu Sihui, the dietician of China's Yuan Dynasty royal court, wrote *Yinshan Zhengyao*, or *Dietary Principles*, a culinary manual full of healthy recipes and medicinal remedies. Recipes included Chinese regional cuisines and included flavors from Mongolia, Turkey, and Persia, reflecting China's central role in long-distance trade routes through Asia and the Middle East. Hu argued that healthy eating would protect against disease. In addition to presenting an ideal national cuisine, his book had a political angle for the Chinese empire: By following his prescriptions, cooks would keep the emperor and court from becoming sick, thereby ensuring the success and efficiency of the Chinese state.

3 Anthropologist Anny Gaul (2021) suggests that Arabic-language Egyptian cookbooks written during British colonial occupation between 1880 and 1950 reveal an emerging relationship between national identity, nationalism, gender, and race. Written by Egyptian women for Egyptian housewives—both elites and those in the expanding middle class—these cookbooks helped shape the nation's tastes and national identity as Egypt emerged from colonial rule. By incorporating both European and local Egyptian recipes and using formal Arabic, the cookbooks directly equated Egyptian culture with modernity, integrated Egypt with the broader Arab East, and oriented Egypt toward Europe and the Middle East and away from Africa. According to the cookbooks, the home, particularly the kitchen, was a site of reform, good taste, and domestic refinement, where women's domestic labor could illustrate Egypt's national character and literally affect the health and progress of the entire nation toward independence.

4 India is a diverse country of 1.4 billion people, hundreds of distinct dialects, sharp religious differences, and strong regional identities. Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai (1988) argues that after independence from British rule in 1947, a new genre of cookbooks led to an emerging Indian cuisine that helped bridge regional and ethnic differences and shape India's national identity. Recipe columns in local vernacular language newspapers became the stuff of many mid-twentieth century regional cookbooks. As economic growth spurred increased worker mobility across the country, a new cosmopolitan middle and upper-middle class emerged that sought both to preserve home-region culinary traditions and to experiment with newly encountered recipes. "Menu" cookbooks—with various sections for rice-based preparations, vegetables, lentils, sweets and savories, pickles and chutneys, and beverages—integrated a wide variety of regional dishes into one Indian culinary framework. Appadurai suggests that this new Indian cuisine has been key to establishing an integrated national identity and nationalist ways of thinking and acting in the postcolonial period.



The Goan Cook's Guide.

PART I

Jevonachem Randop

SOUPS

Tomato Soup

1. Gue don rat soupachem mas, cator mas addanchem, fodd addam ani gal tim pondac soupachea aidonant, voir gal massache cuddke, tin morttelam udoc sodd, ani galun irlo aleacho cuddco dovor sizonc ec panch horam. Tea upraut tem udoc vo ros, zantun sizlam mas, gal dusrea eca aidonanant. Daddaus mas cor tacho tancot titlo bharic khimo thoddea un udcan, gal tea rossan, ani dovor don horam eke thondd suater. Goroz ternam tachi chorob cadd samballum. Gorom cor thoddo mosco ani eoc voddlo cando catrun gal to mosco tantun, boro tamboddo zatoch cadd mosco ani gal don tomatam catrun, maguir soupacho cald. Dovor sizonc ec dha misut, maguir gau gueun lugott. Goroz ternam un cor galun ruchic zal tem mitt.

Chicken Mulligatawney

2. Catrun pilache cor 12 vo 16 cuddke, sizoi domar gueun chachim don copam udoc; vantt bharic 6 miriam, *inch*-a eddo olldicho ani aleacho cuddco, ec culher-bor sukim danniam ani ec suki mirsang. Acho pitto missoi pilachea caldan, domar sizoi cald, mas mou zai passun, ani datt lugttan tachi gravy-gau. Nitou aidonnan un cor chachem culher-bor ghee, tamboddo cor eoc cando xinon, gal tantun mas ani gravy, zai tem mitt gal, ani, aloun borem, sizoi. Di mezac ambott limbeam borobor, anche cuddke corun.

Mulligatawney

3. Soupac zai titlem udoc gueun sizoi eoc rat bocoddechem mas, ache cuddke corun; mas cadd ani aloi tantun coddiecho mossalo. Baz eoc cando xinon, gal coddi ani mas, nimanno ordea narlacho ros gal. Di ambott limbeam borobor. Coddiecho mossalo boro vanttunc zai, gueun 6 *ground-nuts*, 8 amendam, ec chachem culher jirem ani rai eoc olldicho cuddco, ani don vo tin culheram baglele chonne.

Many families have favorite meals or dishes that appear at special occasions. Imagine all of these meals, dishes, flavors, ingredients, and preparations as part of your family cookbook. What tale does your family's cookbook tell? Perhaps it is just a collection of notes or loose pages. Perhaps it is oral instructions handed down by a parent or grandparent or notes scribbled hastily in the margins of someone else's cookbook.

- What roles do food, cooking, and eating play in your own family's sense of cultural or ethnic identity?
- In what ways are you continuing or reshaping that story?

Anti-Colonialism and Nationalism

At times, efforts to imagine a national identity among a diverse group of people gain strength through the need—perceived or real—to join together against the threat of a common enemy. The outsiders—"others" who do not belong to the group—may be stereotyped along lines of religion, race, language, ethnicity, or political beliefs. War is the most dramatic strategy for evoking nationalism and mobilizing a population for the project of nation building.

Through their colonial conquests over more than 400 years, the emerging nation-states of Europe and, later, Japan in Asia, redrew the political borders of much of the world to suit their own economic and political interests. In the search for raw materials, cheap labor, and markets for their expanding economies, they mapped out territorial boundaries without regard to local ethnic, political, economic, or religious realities (see Chapter 11 on the global economy). In the process, colonial activity disrupted long-established and complex local and regional social, economic, and political relationships. Colonialism had a particularly negative impact on Indigenous people around the world who faced forced labor, relocation, forced assimilation, violence, and genocide (Maybury-Lewis 2002).

The destruction of European and Japanese economies during World War II (1939–45) weakened the colonial powers' ability to control their colonies. As a result, national independence movements that had been gaining strength in colonies throughout Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and the Caribbean before World War II—and that had developed military capabilities and guerrilla fighting tactics during the war—were strongly positioned to turn their efforts toward liberating their countries from their colonial occupiers. The anti-colonialist efforts led to a rise of nationalism in former colonies as disparate populations banded together to reassert local control (Cesaire 1955; Fanon 1961).

The following case studies from Zimbabwe, Iraq, and Argentina explore the challenges experienced by emerging nations in the postcolonial period and will expand your understanding of the intersection of nation, nationalism, nation building, and the modern nation-state. Can you identify in these examples the key concepts introduced in this chapter?

Guerrillas, Spirit Mediums, and Nationalism in Zimbabwe Zimbabwe was the last African colony to become independent (in 1980). In *Guns and Rain: Guerrillas and Spirit Mediums in Zimbabwe* (1985), anthropologist David Lan examines the role of local religious beliefs and practices of ordinary people in the nationalist movement for liberation. In the rural Shona region of northern Zimbabwe, bordering Mozambique, social life during the precolonial period

was organized around chiefs and chiefdoms. Local leaders were most often the direct descendants of a line of chiefs and kings, but their authority rested on their ability to bring rain to the farming communities under their protection and jurisdiction. This authority was traditionally legitimized through a public ritual led by the local spirit medium—a religious specialist who could communicate directly with the spirits of the ancestors. While in a trance, the spirit medium would be possessed by *Mhondoro*, the spirits of dead Shona kings and chiefs. Through the medium, these royal ancestors would confer their blessing and legitimacy on the new chief.

But during nearly 100 years under British colonialism, the British administration usurped the role of selecting local chiefs. As a result, the chiefs, who no longer had the conferred support of the ancestors, lost much of their authority in the eyes of the local population. Spirit mediums, ignored and marginalized from the colonial political process, yet with their own claims to authority through their ability to communicate with *Mhondoro*, often became points of resistance to colonial rule. When the struggle for independence began in the 1970s, guerrilla fighters opposing the British needed the support of the local population, especially the rural farming population that made up most of the country. Lan tells of the strategic alliance formed in the north between guerrilla fighters, many of whom were not Shona, and local spirit mediums, who lent legitimacy, support, and protection to their struggle.

MAP 6.8
Zimbabwe

Through the alliance, spirit mediums drew on their deep history and connections in local communities to give legitimacy to the guerrillas fighting against the British colonial occupation. Using elaborate rituals, the spirit mediums—possessed by *Mhondoro*—allowed the spirits of dead Shona kings and chiefs to recognize the guerrillas as incarnations of royal warriors of the past and as legitimate leaders in the current liberation struggle. In the process, the spirit mediums placed combatants under the direct protection of the ancestors and thereby legitimized their cause in the eyes of the local communities. For a time, the power of the anti-colonial guerrilla fighters who brought guns supplanted that of the local chiefs who brought rain.

Nehanda Nyakasikana, a spirit medium, was imprisoned by the colonial government of Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) for resisting government authority and assisting guerrilla fighters during the nation's war of independence.

Lan records detailed interviews with fighters who vividly recounted how their ancestors protected and guided them to safety and victory. After liberation, the ancestors were celebrated both by the common people in the streets and by the new

Haley Duschinski

Ethnicity and Nationalism in the India-Pakistan Borderland

For more than fifteen years, anthropologist Haley Duschinski has been conducting research on the ongoing conflict in Kashmir Valley, the homeland of the Kashmiri ethnic community. Located high in the Himalayas on the disputed border between India and Pakistan, Kashmir has become the most densely militarized zone in the world. More than 500,000 Indian security forces patrol the towns and villages, stationed in sandbag bunkers and sprawling camps as a massive popular uprising of Kashmiris resists Indian rule. In recent years, summer uprisings have led to frequent strikes, street protests, funeral processions, stone pelting, curfews, and tear gassing. And the use of lethal force by Indian security personnel against civilians—including human rights abuses, extrajudicial killing, disappearance, rape, and torture—has become commonplace. As Duschinski notes, "The militarization of Kashmiri society is absolutely pervasive—both in terms of the constant presence of the troops and also in the way in which their presence has shaped all aspects of life."

Duschinski's long-term research in Kashmir has closely followed the shifting strategies of an independence movement to draw on notions of shared ethnic Kashmiri identity to mobilize for self-determination against the rule of the Indian state.

"Young people are at the forefront of the movement today, driving it forward. Their ethnic identity—what it means for them to be Kashmiri—is largely defined by their shared experience of struggling against oppression, their shared experience of having to fight for the right to determine their own political futures. And they are developing different creative forms to articulate their demands and to express the complex realities of what it means to live life under occupation."

Their creative resistance strategies include everything from stone pelting at security forces, to protest demonstrations, mock trials and tribunals, documentation projects, and all kinds of artistic expressions. The movement now includes Kashmir's first rapper, MC Kash; its first novelist to reach a wide Western audience, Mirza Waheed; and its first graphic novelist, Malik Sajad.

In the last few years Kashmiri activists have sought to engage an international audience, hoping to build international support for their movement. "Kashmiris largely reject the legitimacy of the Indian state in their homeland. Under the emergency laws, the state has been carrying out violence against them, but they have no legal redress within the formal legal system. The question is: How should people seek redress? Their only alternative has been to make legal appeals to the very state that has been responsible for carrying out the violations in the first place. And they do—they fight these human rights cases in the courts. I track these legal battles as part of my fieldwork. But they also recognize that the international community is another potential audience for their complaints

Pro-independence Kashmiri protestors in Srinagar Valley, Kashmir.

and one that might be able to apply moral pressure on the Indian state to respond, not only to the legal claims but also to the political claims about the future of the region.

"India and Pakistan have pursued various forms of dialogue regarding the Kashmir conflict over the decades, but Kashmiris have had a hard time making the case that they should have a seat at that table, that their voices should be heard. Anthropology, by its nature, foregrounds and privileges the needs, priorities, and concerns of local people. This has real-world relevance in conflict situations, where people's local perspectives are often overlooked or seen as secondary to larger national security or geopolitical concerns."

What drew Duschinski, a native of a small town in South Carolina, to become interested in Kashmir? "The local economy of my hometown was completely dominated by a major nuclear weapons production site built in the 1950s and active throughout the Cold War. In high school, I became politically active in opposition to it. It was part of my life from a young age, which meant that I grew up always thinking about the state capacity for mass violence, how our national security program shapes people's lives, my responsibilities as a U.S. citizen to my own country and to the rest of the world.

"I've always struggled to make sense of state violence in my own society, including direct violence of warfare as well as indirect violence of institutionalized racism, discrimination, and inequality that are structured into our democratic system. This led me, in college, to develop an interest in India—which is, after all, the world's largest democracy. Learning about political processes in India, especially patterns of state oppression and local community forms of resistance, helps me understand similar dynamics in my own society more clearly."

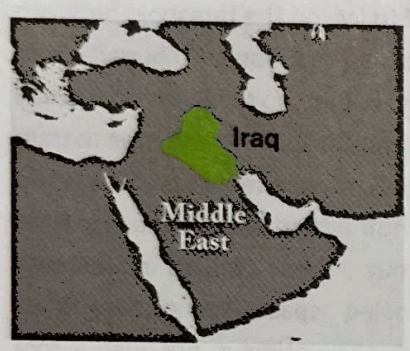
Duschinski relates the practice of anthropology to developing what the cultural critic Edward Said has called "wakefulness": "For me, this wakefulness comes from a fundamental commitment to the project of ethnography, which is grounded in participant observation. It comes through training yourself to live on the threshold between insider and outsider status so that you're fully participating in the world around you, but you're always constantly observing it, analyzing it, and critiquing it. You have to train your mind to see the world that way. You have to train your body to inhabit that space. Participant observation is not just a tool that we use during fieldwork. It becomes part of your way of being in the world.

> *"Wakefulness is about living in that state of constant awareness—and not just passively being there, but owning it, wanting to see the world against the grain, and being willing to describe what you see."*

"Wakefulness is about living in that state of constant awareness—and not just passively being there, but owning it, wanting to see the world against the grain, and being willing to describe what you see. This carries certain risks because it often means analyzing and interpreting situations in ways that run counter to dominant ideologies and the status quo. There's a revolutionary potential embedded in the heart of anthropology. And I think this is why many Kashmiri students appreciate the project of anthropology. Their homeland is a contested border territory, and they've grown up seeing the world from the margins, from the peripheries. The way they see the world does not fit neatly into nationalist narratives or dominant discourses. Instead, it fundamentally challenges them. Anthropology legitimizes that alternative standpoint, privileges it, calls for it. Anthropology trains you to inhabit that space and live your life there—awake."

national leaders. Banners and pictures of the ancestors hung in public places, and they were effectively installed as protectors of the new Zimbabwe. The liberation struggle had brought renewed, deep connections between tradition and modernity, past and present, ancestors and the living. Reinvented ethnic traditions merged with nationalist movements to promote and sustain Zimbabwe's anti-colonialist struggles.

Are There Any Iraqis in Iraq? After the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq in 2003 and the overthrow of Iraqi president Saddam Hussein, news reports featured stories of ethnic violence among Sunni, Shia, and Kurds—violence that the media portrayed as the true obstacle to democracy and peace. The front pages of newspapers and the leads on evening news told stories of seemingly endless and senseless suicide bombings, roadside explosives, armed militias, kidnappings, assassinations, and warfare. Elections were held, but the elected officials, torn by intense ethnic, religious, and political differences, were unable to form a functioning government. Typical of the way the Western press reports on supposed ethnic conflicts around the world—whether in Rwanda, Sudan, Sri Lanka, India, or the former Yugoslavia—deep and long-standing ethnic and religious cleavages in Iraq were blamed for an environment in which civil war and government collapse were almost inevitable.



MAP 6.9
Iraq

Why, after so many years of U.S. economic and military support, have the Iraqi people struggled to form a strong government and military and stop the violence? Aren't there any Iraqis in Iraq—people who would put the country first, ahead of other ethnic or religious differences?

Iraq does not have an ancient history as a nation. Although cities such as Baghdad have an ancient history in the region of Mesopotamia, sometimes called the "cradle of civilization," the country of Iraq did not exist before World War I. Even then, Iraq was not formed through local initiative. A secret treaty between France and Great Britain (the Sykes-Picot Agreement), signed during World War I, carved up their opponent, the Ottoman Empire, to form many of the countries we find in the Middle East today. With Russia's consent, the two European powers drew national borders—including those of present-day Iraq—to meet their needs for economic access, trade routes, and political control. The powers mapped out these borders with little regard for the history, politics, religions, and ethnic makeup of the local populations.

With a mandate from the new League of Nations in 1920, the British established a monarchical government in the new state of Iraq and recruited and empowered leaders from the minority Sunni population to run it. Members of the Shia and Kurd populations, excluded from leadership roles in the government, actively fought for independence from British colonial occupation.

Britain subsequently granted full independence to Iraq in 1932 (with the exception of another brief military occupation during World War II), but the Sunni minority retained control of the government until the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003.

After the U.S. military occupied Iraq in 2003, the people of Iraq inherited a collapsed state structure and confronted the prospects of nation building in a country under foreign occupation that had experienced decades of state-sponsored violence. Yet media representations of Iraq consistently trace its problems to the roots of ethnic conflict. Social scientists from many fields question these simple storylines that portray deep ethnic and religious hatreds as the cause of Iraq's current difficulties (Ericksen 2010). Ethnicity, they warn, should never be seen that simply or monolithically. A more careful examination may find that (1) ethnic and religious lines are not drawn so clearly, and (2) other identities based on factors such as region, family, and class—even international relations—may also play key roles in the unfolding of events. With a weak state unable to provide security to its population, people turn to other strategies for mobilizing support, safety, and the means for achieving a livelihood (Eller 1999).

Sports and National Identity in Argentina As anthropologists, we know that sports are more than just a game. Sports are a venue for creating and negotiating personal and national identity, imagining one's community, and inventing traditions (MacClancy 1996). In *Masculinities: Football, Polo and the Tango in Argentina* (1999), anthropologist Eduardo Archetti suggests that football (called soccer in the United States)—and, to a lesser extent, polo and the tango—has been key to the making of the Argentine national identity.

Argentina began as a country of immigrants. Between 1870 and 1914—at the same time that the United States experienced massive waves of immigration—6 million European immigrants, rich and poor, arrived in Argentina. Most came from Italy and Spain, but together the newcomers represented dozens of European ethnic groups and nationalities all looking for a fresh start on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Thus, Argentina's rural and urban areas became places of intense ethnic and cultural mixing. Buenos Aires, the capital city, was completely transformed. What had been a premodern city on the edges of the world economy became a global, cosmopolitan center full of cultural connections and dislocations. Forging a national community with a sense of cohesion, connection, and identity out of this ethnic and cultural diversity would not be easy. Soccer would play a key role in the transformation. Archetti suggests that as Argentinians reinvented soccer, they invented themselves.

MAP 6.10
Argentina

Argentinian boys play soccer in a *potrero*—an outdoor lot. Has soccer helped Argentina become a nation?

British immigrants had brought soccer to Argentina in the nineteenth century. The sport became so popular that by the 1920s, Argentina had established itself as a world soccer leader. In a few decades, soccer had been transformed from a foreign import to a national obsession, played with a unique style and passion.

Today, soccer is Argentina's national sport, a passion that cuts across boundaries of class, region, race, and ethnic status. The soccer exploits of Argentina's local and national teams are told and retold in living rooms, at bars, and at pickup games, and they are frequent topics in the press and popular novels. When the national team competes in tournaments abroad or when players travel to perform for club teams elsewhere in the world, football becomes not only a forum for establishing a national identity but also a symbolic arena for representing Argentina and its citizens on the world stage.

When asked, Argentinians say that the most successful teams and players—like Diego Maradona or Lionel Messi—are those that faithfully mirror the authentic national style. This particular brand they trace to the *potrero*—the empty and uneven lots of confined outdoor spaces where neighborhood boys play after school without teachers or coaches. There, one controls the ball by creative dribbling. In this unique social and spatial context, Argentina's boys develop a style of soccer that is unique to their country—a style not of efficiency, practicality, results, force, and goals but of creativity, imagination, spontaneity, improvisation, inventiveness, and freedom. This style—the creation of beauty, joy, elegance, and the unexpected, the creation of the beautiful game—has become a symbolic expression of the national capabilities and potential of the Argentinian people.

As globalization creates flows of people, ideas, goods, and images across borders and builds linkages among local communities worldwide, we might anticipate that ethnicity and nationalism—which are associated with local and national identities—would have less capacity to shape people's lives and influence how people make decisions. Instead, in many parts of the world, we see an intensification of ethnic and national identities and related conflicts. Understanding the processes through which ethnicity and nationalism are imagined and mobilized and their traditions are invented, often over relatively short periods of time, can provide a set of tools for analyzing the role of ethnicity in our world today.

Thinking Like an Anthropologist: Who Is an American?

In the opening story of the Rohingya and in the ethnographic examples throughout the chapter, we have seen how ethnic identity and nationalism continue to be imagined, built, nurtured, taught, learned, promoted, negotiated, and contested. And we have explored an anthropological perspective on three questions that connect the concepts of ethnicity and nationalism:

- What does "ethnicity" mean to anthropologists?
- How and why is ethnicity created, mobilized, and contested?
- What is the relationship of ethnicity to the nation?

Few of us are aware of the roles ethnicity and nationalism play in our lives or how our culture works to promote them. For instance, a former Facebook employee, Frances Haugen, revealed in 2021 that Facebook had been used by Myanmar's military and civil society groups to promote misinformation and to amplify violence against the Rohingya. As you learn to think like an anthropologist, can you begin to see the process of ethnic identity construction at work in your own life and in the major debates of the culture that surrounds you? Consider these recent debates about who is and who is not an American:

- Despite an official birth certificate and other clear evidence that former U.S. president Barack Obama was born in the state of Hawaii on August 4, 1961, more than 20 percent of Americans surveyed in a September 2015 poll by CNN/ORG claimed that he is not a U.S. citizen, and 29 percent expressed their belief that Obama is a Muslim, despite his repeated professions of Christian faith (CNN/ORC International 2015). How is that possible?
- Some leading politicians want to change the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The amendment was passed after the Civil War to protect African Americans by ensuring that anyone born in the United States is granted full rights of citizenship. Children born in the United States to undocumented Hispanic parents are the target of these recent suggested changes to the Constitution. Some people fear that immigrant parents intentionally give birth on U.S. soil so they can become citizens when their child attains the age of twenty-one. Do you think the U.S. Constitution should be amended to address this issue? Or is this debate simply a substitute for a larger struggle over who belongs to U.S. culture and who does not? How should a child's nationality and citizenship be defined?
- In recent years, leading political candidates have evoked notions of ethnicity, nationalism, and citizenship to rally voters, suggesting that Muslims should be banned from immigration to the United States; that 10–15 million undocumented immigrants living in the United States, including children who accompanied them and who have grown up in the United States, should be deported; that Muslim mosques should be placed under surveillance; and that the United States should only accept Syrian refugees if they are Christian. What role do ethno-political identity entrepreneurs play in attempts to define immigrants and Muslims, in particular, as ethnic outsiders in the United States?

After reading this chapter, you should be better prepared with the anthropological tools you need to understand the ways in which ethnicity and nationalism work in your life and in your imagined communities—whether they are built around your family, religion, hometown, ethnic group, or nation-state.

Key Terms

ethnicity (p. 206)
origin myth (p. 208)
ethnic boundary marker (p. 208)
situational negotiation of identity (p. 208)
identity entrepreneurs (p. 211)
genocide (p. 211)
ethnic cleansing (p. 215)
melting pot (p. 219)
assimilation (p. 219)
multiculturalism (p. 219)
state (p. 221)
nation-state (p. 221)
citizenship (p. 221)
nation (p. 221)
nationality (p. 221)
nationalism (p. 221)
imagined community (p. 221)
diaspora (p. 223)

For Further Exploration

Bosnia: We Are All Neighbors. 1993. Directed by Debbie Christie. Granada Television. Film of a Bosnian village studied by anthropologist Tone Bringa before and after ethnic cleansing in 1993.

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